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municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Youth and Recreation Branch

Recreation and Leisure

Shorter working hours created by new applications of modern technology, extended holidays, early retirement and longer life expectancy all contribute to increased leisure time. This extra time-of-one's-own should add to personal fulfilment and enjoyment of life. But sometimes it does not because people have not learned how to use this time beneficially, profitably, happily.

Read the articles in magazines and newspapers. Listen to the panel discussions on TV and radio. You are left with the feeling increased leisure can be a problem.

Let's take a look at this problem of leisure. First let's define leisure. Many consider it in terms of time—the time in which we can do what we want. Others consider leisure to be a state of mind in committed or uncommitted time. This is the basic Aristotelian position that leisure is a state of being, a state of being free. Not simply of being free from work or compulsion, but the state of being free *to.* Free to be yourself. Free to be a human being. Free to be everything that God promised man—everything that man has the potential to be.

Whatever meaning you decide to give to leisure, useful and creative recreation activities can help people use increased leisure in rewarding ways, or can help provide a leisurely state of mind.

Since we have given some definitions of leisure, let's define recreation. Again, there are a number of meanings. Oxford defines recreation as the action of recreating oneself or another, or the fact of being recreated by some pleasant occupation, pastime or amusement.

Depending upon personal preferences and attitudes recreation may include such things as:

- appreciation of the beauty of nature experienced on a country walk
- exhilaration of a close curling match, or a fast run down a ski slope
- gaining new knowledge, or learning a new skill
- fellowship of active membership in a community organization.
- relaxation of reading a good book, or watching TV
- enjoyment of a fishing, hunting or boating trip
- stimulation of a lively discussion
- animation of a social event or party
- enjoyment of singing in a choir, or taking part in a play
- competition of a friendly game of golf, or a bowling match
- sense of service attained through leadership in a community group
- satisfaction of creating things in a craft class or home workshop.

All things that people choose to do in their leisure time are considered to be recreation and should add to their enjoyment and personal satisfaction.

To expand on the benefits derived from recreation, it should add to:

Happiness

recreation should take its place with education, religion, work and health as one of the five essential factors in every individual's development.

Physical health

recreation provides opportunities for muscular activity, the development of physical skills, increased circulation and respiratory stimulation.

Mental health

recreation provides relaxation, increases interests, enjoyment and personal satisfactions vital to good mental health.

Maturity

the influence of recreation on the development of social attitudes which affect the individual as a member of a group, encourages loyalty, group-consciousness, cooperation and concern for others.

Community solidarity and tone of living

community recreational opportunities make possible a full, happy and abundant life for the residents. Recreation can also be a force for bringing various organizations together for mutual understanding assistance and support.

Recreation is important because it satisfies people's needs for:

Relaxation
through quiet activities such as reading.

Creativity
through participation and involvement in the arts.

Fellowship
through membership in social or interest groups.

Adventure
through outdoor activities such as camping and boating.

Achievement
through improving skills in any activity from golf to guitar playing.

Physical fitness
through participation in a wide range of physical activities (sports, dance).

Intellectual challenge
through participation in civic affairs, discussion groups or continuing education.

Emotional experience
through love of beauty in nature, the arts, or excitement of sports.

Competition
through sport and competitions such as drama festivals.

Sense of service
through youth work, volunteer work or executive position in a community club.

Make a list of the types of satisfactions that you derive from participation in meaningful recreation activities.

Your list should include satisfactions such as relaxation, competition, sense of service, physical fitness, fellowship, creativity, achievement, adventure, intellectual and emotional stimulation.

The sphere in which people should find meaning and purpose in their leisure is that of family, neighborhood and community with its schools and churches, libraries and cultural institutions, playfields and community centres, sports, recreation and social groups.

Every community should provide a wide variety of recreation activities so that citizens of all ages and all interests can choose leisure pursuits appropriate to their needs and interests.

If people are to keep their sense of purpose and achieve happiness in today's frenetic and complex society, programs of community activities are essential.